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cannot apparently abstain from food without inconvenience for more than eight hours at a time.

3. When exerting themselves in any way they perspire freely, which may account for their inordinate thirst. So great, indeed, is their inability to endure any privation in respect to drink, that they seldom leave home on the shortest expedition, whether by land or sea, without providing themselves with one or more bamboo vessels, called *gōb-*, containing a supply of fresh water.

4. Loss of sleep they can bear well only when under the influence of strong excitement, as in turtle hunting, or at festive gatherings, where singing and dancing are kept up for many successive hours;[1] they have even been known to spend forty-eight hours at such times without taking any rest.

5. What little cool weather there is in the latitude of their islands, during December and January, they dislike extremely; in striking evidence of this they are found, as I will elsewhere mention,[2] unconsciously concurring with the great Italian poet in depicting the region of punishment, for the souls of the wicked, as one of intense cold. After this, it will appear somewhat strange to say that, in spite of their aversion to what they consider cold weather—which never registers less than 69° F. on the highest elevation in South Andaman—they are careful, during the hot season, to avoid any lengthened exposure to the direct rays of the sun, and endeavour to lessen the discomfort caused by the heat by smearing their persons with a white-wash of common white clay and water.[3] It has long been erroneously believed that they have recourse to this expedient in order to allay the inconvenience which they would otherwise suffer from the bites of mosquitoes and other jungle pests; but the true reason for the practice is, I am well assured, that which I have above given, for the various insects which might annoy them are, for the most part, kept away by the smoke of the hut fire, beside which a great portion of their time is spent when at rest, or when engaged in any sedentary occupation.

6. The voices of the men are usually clear without being deep, while those of the women, especially when raised, are very shrill.

7. The mucous membrane of the mouth is stained with pigment to a greater degree than was found to be the case with such of the natives of India as were compared with them.

8. The general excellence of the teeth strikes one as remark-

[1] *Vide post* "Games and Amusements," paragraph 32.

[2] *Vide post* "Religious Beliefs, &c.," paragraph 25.

[3] I would here draw attention to the fact, that while the object in smearing themselves with *ōg-* wash is to keep themselves as cool as possible, they often daub their bodies with *kòi ob-* after sundown for the opposite reason, *i.e.*, for the sake of warmth.

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264 day's hunt, they usually provide themselves with some fire and a *gōb-*[1] of food, which they warm up and enjoy about midday:[2] no difference is made between the sexes, but all fare alike.

261 5. The average amount eaten by an Andamanese adult appears to exceed that of a native of India, and to average three or four pounds daily, while, like many other savages, after a successful hunt, or on some special occasion, when dancing is carried on through the entire night,[3] the consumption of food is surprising, and has, in some instances, been estimated at upwards of ten pounds of pork, or turtle, in the twenty-four hours, helped out by mouthfuls of some one or more of the delicacies above enumerated.[4]

264 6. As may be assumed from foregoing sections, caste distinctions are unknown; while, however, all members of a family take their meals together, a married man is only permitted to eat with other Benedicts and bachelors, but never with any women save those of his own household, unless indeed he be well advanced in years. Bachelors as well as spinsters are required to take their meals apart with those of their respective sexes.

7. Their mode of eating meat is to cram a large piece into the mouth, and then to cut off whatever is in excess[5] with a bamboo or cane (now-a-days generally a steel) knife. The same custom, carried to a more disgusting extreme, is found among 271 the Esquimaux.[6] Speaking generally of the Andamanese it may be said that water is their only beverage, for though the aborigines in the vicinity of Port Blair have acquired a strong liking for rum, &c., they have not been permitted to gratify it; if very thirsty while on a fishing expedition, and all the fresh water supply be exhausted[7] the *àryô·to-* pour water over their

[1] *Vide* Appendix B, item 82.

[2] This applies to the meat of the turtle, pig, iguana, and paradoxurus; the remains of a feast of fish, shell-fish, and prawns are not warmed up a second time; a further distinction is made in the case of turtles' eggs, the three insects mentioned in paragraph 3, edible roots, and such fruits as are cooked (*vide post* paragraph 19), for these are left to cool before they are eaten.

[3] *Vide* "Games and Amusements," paragraphs 21 and 22.

[4] *Bêche de mer* and edible birds'-nests, so highly esteemed by some, and of [262] which large supplies are obtainable along their coasts, are not regarded by the Andamanese as fit for food.

[5] For the following note, which refers to a similar practice among the Napo-Indians of South America, I am indebted to Mr. W. L. Distant:—"In eating meat (usually monkey, sea-cow, and peccari) we observed that they did not tear or bite it, but, putting one end of a long piece in the mouth, cut off what they could not get in, as Darwin noticed among the Fuegians" (Jas. Orton: "Andes and the Amazon," p. 168).

[6] *Vide* Lubbock's "Prehistoric Times," p. 486.

[7] They will now-a-days occasionally assuage their thirst, when away from home, by cutting off a piece of ground rattan (*bôl-*); this practice is only known to the people of South Andaman, and has been borrowed from the Burmese convicts.

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heads or jump overboard, and even at times try to alleviate their sufferings by swallowing salt water.[1]

8. In opening certain shell-fish[2] the adze is not employed, but one of the valves of the *Cyrena* is dexterously inserted between the lips, which are thus forced apart, after which the fish is killed with a knife or bladed arrow, and boiled; the *Tridacna crocea* and *Tridacna squamosa* are opened by inserting a piece of wood as a wedge between the valves,[3] afterwards the fish is despatched by stabbing it with an arrow point or blade; the various *Arca* species and the *Mytilus smaragdinus* are, however, not so treated, but are placed among a heap of burning logs for a few moments, the object being merely to part the valves, which would otherwise be a matter of some difficulty: when this is accomplished the shells are removed by means of the bamboo tongs (*kai-*[4]), and their half-cooked contents are transferred to a pot[5] (*būj-*) in which a little water has been placed; after being boiled a short time the gravy and flesh are eaten with the help of the shells. In former times oysters were eaten *cooked*,[6] but now their consumption appears to be confined to the inhabitants of North (and possibly also Little) Andaman: they give no reason for this change, but it may be due to their having occasionally suffered by feasting unconsciously on the poisonous, or at least indigestible, variety so commonly found in the mangrove swamps.

9. Dr. Day remarked that the mullet was their favourite fish, and "one day, having placed a quantity of different species before them, they helped themselves in the following order: . . . . *Chorinemus*, *Platycephalus*, horse-mackerel or *Caranx*, *Chrysophrys calamara*, and lastly *Tetrodon*, or frog-fish, which latter has generally the credit of being poisonous." My experience is that there are apparently no fresh-water, and but few salt-water, fish[7] which they will not eat.

10. It is a mistake to suppose that pigs were ever scarce in these islands, for though it was formerly more difficult than at the present day to shoot them, there is no lack of evidence to

[1] *Vide ante* "Medicine," paragraph 4.

[2] Viz., those of the *Pinna* and *Cyrena* species.

[3] This is only attempted when they succeed in surprising the fish before it has time to close its valves.

[4] *Vide* Appendix B, item 80.

[5] *Vide* Appendix B, item 18. [Note.—Water is boiled in a *būj-* by the ordinary process, and not by heated stones being dropped into it.]

[6] That Europeans should swallow these molluscs *raw* is a matter of considerable surprise to them.

[7] They prefer the fleshy part of the head to any other portion. To cut a fish is termed *chó·lke*, while to remove its head, tail, and entrails is styled *arwá·gke*.

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

3. Food

In the absence of men, women also are good at fishing inside the coral reefs. They do this with two small nets used together. Their catch generally consists of brilliantly coloured fish with yellow, red, green, blue, black and white stripes forming varied and attractive designs. The Onge eat all fish without discrimination. My Indian collaborators, on the other hand, considered the coloured fish dangerous to their health and refused to cook them ; the Sacred Vedas, in fact, advise the avoidance of brigthly hued fish and of fish without scales. I wanted to try both kinds, and found them perfectly palatable, tasty and harmless.

No tool, used for any purpose by the Onge, ever gets a cleaning. Cleanliness, I repeat, is unknown in Little Andaman. See how food is prepared and disposed of ! Care is taken only not to throw big pieces of meat intended for cooking directly on the bare ground ; but once it is cooked, food is treated with the utmost disregard for dirt, dust, cobwebs and other such things. It is usually left lying around on large leaves spread out for the purpose. The remains of the Onge's orgiastic meals are kept out of reach of the dogs on the ceiling of the huts, to be covered with flies when no fire is lit directly below. Sand and grit may get wedged annoyingly in the teeth, but not such impalpable things as dust or cobwebs. The use of unclean food is not repugnant to the Onge. The same can be said for water polluted by dogs drinking and bathing in it, or by the presence of putrefying carcases. In the west of Little Andaman I saw some Onge avidly drinking from pools of a blackish water with a revolting sulphurous smell. After thoroughly filtering and boiling it, I too used such water, for it was the only water available in the neighborhood. This caused no ill effects. My Indian men considered it perfectly healthy and invigorating, and drank it safely in its natural condition.

The Onge eat with their unwashed fingers, without the help of tools. On rare occasions they use platters made of the flattened-out stems – or bracts – of *areca* palms. They sometimes carry these platters when travelling, but of course never wash them although they become coated in rancid, greasy filth. They soon assume a dark colour and a truly revolting appearance – aside from the awful smell. A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN's statement – that the Andamanese paint their bodies to neutralize the unpleasant smell of food that clings to them after their orgiastic feedings – shows only indirect knowledge of the life and manners of those people. Even the horrible flatulence that follows their pork orgies is not considered an inconvenience ; yet it is much more revolting than all the other body odours.

Although the Onge observe few hygienic precautions they do follow a number of medical practices, not all devoid of beneficial effects. Here are a few more remarks on their eating and drinking habits. For about six months of the year, between November and April, water is scarce in Little Andaman. Every kind of fresh water is then considered good by the Onge, regardless of whether it is a murky infusion of rotting leaves or afloat with the putrefied

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
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312 271 [136] [415] [516] 231 caracases of small animals. During the droughts, marine hermit crabs, of which a profusion is found in Little Andaman even far from the sea-shore, often choose to die in fresh-water pools. They are not removed from the pools. A nautilus shell is sometimes used as a drinking vessel ; failing this, the Onge lap up the water like animals, on all fours, directly from the pool. Since they are very fond of dogs, man and dog drink together from the same tiny pool, often holding no more than a few pints of water. Dogs reached Great Andaman as early as 1857 ; they came to Little Andaman much later. Before that time there were no dogs in the Andamanese Archipelago. They soon became the natives' cherished and much appreciated assistants in the hunting of wild pigs. Many unhygienic habits followed the appearance of dogs in the Andamans.

271 [47] 123 The Onge have no idea of boiling water for the purpose of disinfection ; nevertheless their health does not appear to suffer at all as a result of the polluted water they drink. When, in 1952, I dug a well near the left bank of Dugong Creek on the north-east coast of Little Andaman, I was compelled to fence it in so as to prevent dogs from drinking it and bathing in it.

264 [231] [136] Dogs lick everything that smells of food, including the cooking pots, and the pots are not washed before use after the dogs have licked them. Swarms of flies of different species and small coleoptera of a brilliant blue colour, one of them 6 mms long, follow the dogs after they have "cleaned" the pots by licking them. They line the inside of the pots with a crawling, living coat, moving restlessly around in search of food. One species of fly, which is of a brilliant, metallic green colour, has a peculiarly disagreeable smell. All the flies lay eggs while feeding, but the eggs are soon devoured by the hovering bluish coleoptera. Thus in a few hours all traces of organic matter disappear from the pots. Subsequent exposure to fire undoubtedly destroys the germs that would otherwise be certainly dangerous to human beings.

415 177 [323] The Onge no longer use indigenous pottery for cooking. Its disappearance is recent, as the sherds that litter Little Andaman prove to the investigator. Excavation in modern kitchen-middens leads to the same conclusion. During the last war, quantities of empty petrol drums were washed up on the Andaman shores. They were found in such numbers that the Onge have not yet used them all up : after 1952 I found several of these containers abandoned, untouched, in the jungle. The primitive inhabitants sawed each container in two cylindrical halves, thus transforming them into cooking pots. The result was that within a few years the fragile ancestral pottery of the Onge disappeared altogether. Furthermore, aluminium pots were distributed among the natives after 1952. Probably the indigenous pottery will never again reappear.

[252] 262 [231] Each half of a petrol drum is large enough to contain a pig, or a turtle weighing 150 lbs, cut into pieces. Only the flesh of these animals is consumed by the Onge ; the nourishing broth is poured out onto the ground or left in the pot to be lapped up by the dogs. The Onge believe that broth is unhealthy and avoid drinking it.

251 [185] No matter how prodigious the catch of sardines or other fish, unobtainable at other times of the year, no attempt is made at storing part of it in view of future shortage. The Onge are unacquainted with methods for preserv-

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
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LIDIO CIPRIANI, Hygiene and Medical Practices among the Onge (Little Andaman)

Plate 1

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a) Onge communal hut.
b) Painted Onge woman drinking from a nautilus shell.
c) Woman with *bataghē* leaves.
d) Filter going from mouth to mouth.

[p. 489 (A)]

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

mothers offering it to the waiting children one after another in strict order. This alone would be enough to explain the spread of the devastating measles epidemics which can attack every member of a hut.

While they love the liquid fat, they despise the broth left behind, and once the meat has been eaten, a thick yellowish soup, not unpleasant, is left in the drum. The dogs love this, and rush for it, putting their paws right into the drum, fighting and snarling in their eagerness to get at it. When they have finished licking, the drum is shining clean and ready for use, with no washing up to do! Clouds of flies descend on the drums, packing into a black swarm all over the bottom and sides, eager to finish off the dogs' work. Sea or river water is often only a yard or two from camp, but no one would dream of washing anything.

Once the meat or fish is cooked, it is often hung in the roof of the hut, out of reach of the dogs. The fact that the roof is dusty and covered in spiders to foul the meat, does not matter; earth and sand get in the way of the teeth, dust and spiders do not. The Onges happily eat contaminated flesh and drink water from pools in which animal carcasses are rotting or dogs are bathing and drinking; the dogs share literally everything with their masters.

On my visits to the island I always had to fence off the wells I had dug out, to avoid a constant battle with the dogs. I always found water only a few metres down, and the dogs revelled in it. In the east, near Nachuge, I saw Onges and dogs together avidly drinking in brackish pools which stank of sulphur, although I must confess that after repeated filtration and boiling the water lost its smell and I was myself able to use it without any ill effects. My men thought it was good for the health to drink it as it was.

During all Onge orgies, and particularly the honey feasts, there is, if possible, even less regard for hygiene. Although the honey is full of wax, larvae, and a few odd bees, their brush-stick only picks up the honey itself. They have another even better way of getting out the honey. A strip of bark about one metre long and as wide as the palm of the hand is taken from a *Ficus*. This is well chewed to make it pliable, and when this is dipped into the honey mixture it emerges dripping with pure honey. Everyone bites at it avidly, young and old, men, women and children, one after another, to the last drop.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

providing not too much effort is required. The Semang and Aeta dig water-holes, and several authors have regarded the Andamanese as differing from them in this respect, but I am able to confirm that they can and do dig water-holes. I first saw them do so in 1951, and in 1952 and again in 1953, near Toqué-è-bùie, I was able to enlarge one. Originally it yielded very little water, and very dirty, as the Onges never bother to go further down than they must – a handful of water is enough. After I had enlarged the well it yielded over half a cubic metre an hour, and I had to build a fence round it to prevent the dogs wallowing in it. I gave the Onges buckets, rope, pick-axes and spades so they could get at clean water, although in view of their natural indolence I rather doubted whether they would be any use. In fact, they used the metal parts for arrow heads and went on as before, drinking out of foul pools covered in rotting vegetation and refuse. It is easy to have clear water on Little Andaman, naturally filtered over the coral formations and never more than two or three metres down, but the effort is too much for the Onges! Usually they drink like animals, lying flat on their stomachs with their lips to the water; some will fold a large leaf into a crude cup, however, and occasionally a fastidious individual will use a *Nautilus* shell.

The water-hole at Toqué-è-bùie alone, if properly maintained, would be able to supply enough water every day for at least five hundred people. The continual falling in of the sides, inevitable in a sandy area, could be permanently prevented by cementing them.